

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6265

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIURT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 2172

EXDIS

DEPT PLEASE PASS AMBASSADOR KEATING

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XF, IS, EG, US

SUBJ: AFTER THE SUSPENSION OF NEGOTIATIONS

THE VIEW FROM TEL AVIV

1. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: AGAINST BACKDROP
OF ISRAELI AND WASHINGTON-BASED REPORTS ABOUT U.S.
PRESURES ON ISRAEL, NEW DOUBTS ABOUT THE CONGRUENCE
OF U.S. AND ISRAELI PERCEPTIONS OF MUTUAL INTERESTS
ARISING IN PART OUT OF RECENT CODEL VISITS AND HEAVY
MEDIA COVERAGE OF BAD NEWS IN S.E. ASIA AND ELSE-
WHERE, ISRAELI RESPONSES TO PRESENT SITUATION HAVE BEEN
MIXED AND UNCERTAIN. ISRAELIS ARE NOT SURE WHETHER THEY
ARE STILL IN TEMPORARY LULL IN A LONG PROCESS OF NEGOTIATIONS
TOWARDS ANOTHER INTERIM AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT, OR HEADED
TOWARDS A BREAKDOWN OF THAT PROCESS WHICH ALMOST ALL BELIEVE
IS LIKELY TO RESULT EVENTUALLY IN WAR. WE THINK NO RESPONSIBLE
ISRAELIS WANT WAR; BUT THERE IS ENOUGH FATALISM EXPRESSED
PRIVATELY TO OFFSET THE
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CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM OF PUBLIC STATEMENTS. UNSURE OF JUST

WHERE THEY ARE HEADED, GOI LEADERSHIP IS TRYING TO RETAIN ITS RECENTLY IMPROVED STANDING WITH PUBLIC BY STICKING TO POSITIONS TAKEN DURING NEGOTIATIONS, WHICH IT BELIEVES ARE WIDELY SUPPORTED, AND WHICH IT WILL HAVE TO DEFEND IF SITUATION DETERIORATES TO POINT OF HOSTILITIES. AT SAME TIME GOI APPEARS TO BE SEEKING WAY TO PREFERRED OPTION OF CONTINUING NEGOTIATIONS, IN ONE FORM OR ANOTHER. IT HAS STATED, BOTH PUBLICLY AND TO CODELS IN PRIVATE, THAT NO MAJOR GOI DEPARTURE FROM POSITION OF MARCH NEGOTIATIONS IS TO BE EXPECTED IN IMMEDIATE FUTURE. THERE HAVE BEEN SOME TENTATIVE SIGNS, HOWEVER, THAT GOVERNMENT MAY BE CONSIDERING MODIFICATIONS TO ITS PREVIOUS POSITION.

2. AS TO US RELATIONSHIP, GOI HAS TRIED, DESPITE A PROVOCATIVE ELEMENT IN PRESS, TO AVOID OPEN QUARREL WHILE MAKING CASE BOTH PUBLICLY AND TO CODELS THAT SADAT WILL BE MORE FLEXIBLE IF US STANDS FIRMLY BEHIND ISRAEL. ISRAELIS INSIST THAT US PRESSURE ON GOI HAS BEEN AND WILL BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE, LEADING TO HARDENING OF GOI NEGOTIATING STANCE. IN TURN, CODELS HAVE UNDERLINED TO ISRAELIS CHANGING NATURE OF CONGRESSIONAL ATTITUDES, INCLUDING DEEP CONCERN ABOUT CONSEQUENCES OF CURRENT STALEMATE AND UNCERTAINTY, EVEN AMONG ISRAEL'S TRADITIONAL FRIENDS, ABOUT FUTURE US AID LEVELS. END SUMMARY.

3. PERIOD OF REASSESSMENT. ISRAELI LEADERS ARE MAINTAINING CAUTIOUS AND LOW-KEYED ATTITUDE TOWARDS WASHINGTON PRESS REPORTS REGARDING TENSIONS IN UNITED STATES-ISRAELI RELATIONS DURING PHASE OF US MIDDLE EAST POLICY REASSESSMENT. ISRAELIS SEEM TO HOPE THAT NEGOTIATIONS CAN STILL BE RESUMED BILATERALLY UNDER US AUSPICES BEFORE RECONVENING OF GENEVA CONFERENCE, THOUGH THEY ARE STICKING TO LINE THAT " WE ARE NOT AFRAID OF GENEVA". LEADERSHIP HAS ALSO MADE SOME EFFORT TO REASSURE ISRAELI PUBLIC THAT DEVELOPMENTS IN S.E. ASIA, WHICH ARE PROMINENTLY FEATURED IN ISRAELI MEDIA, WILL NOT HAVE REPERCUSSIONS ON U.S. ROLE IN MIDEAST OR AFFECT CREDIBILITY OF US COMMITMENT TO ISRAEL THOUGH PRIVATELY THERE IS UNDOUBTEDLY CONCERN. INEVITABLY, ISRAELI PUBLIC LOOKS ON

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US POLICY REASSESSMENT AND ON S.E. ASIAN EVENTS WITH CONSIDERABLE TREPIDATION.

4. U.S./ ISRAELI RELATIONS. IMPLICATION OF REASSESSMENT AND VIEWS OF NEW CONGRESS ABOUT ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE, INCLUDING ISSUE OF U.S. AID FOR ISRAEL, HAVE PROVIDED PRINCIPAL FOCUS FOR DISCUSSIONS IN PAST WEEK BETWEEN CODELS AND SENIOR GOI LEADERS. CODELS LEFT ISRAELIS WITH

MIXED IMPRESSION OF CONGRESSIONAL ATTITUDES. SOME INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS EXPRESSED THEIR ADMIRATION FOR PRESIDENT SADAT'S FLEXIBILITY, SINCERITY AND MODERATION IN LATEST NEGOTIATIONS, WHILE OTHERS EMPHASIZED THEIR CONTINUING FIRM SUPPORT FOR ISRAELI POLICY. CODELS INDICATED THAT BOTH ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESS WERE DISAPPOINTED WITH SUSPENSION OF NEGOTIATIONS, AND IMPATIENT WITH LACK OF PROGRESS TOWARDS A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. COMMON ELEMENT EXPRESSED BY ALL CODELS, WE BELIEVE, WAS CONCERN OVER CURRENT SITUATION AND DANGERS OF CONTINUED STALEMATE. THEY ALSO MADE IT CLEAR THAT FULFILLMENT OF ISRAEL'S AID REQUEST IN ITS ENTIRETY WAS PROBLEMATIC, GIVEN U.S. ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTIES AND CHANGING ATTITUDES TO FOREIGN ASSISTANCE.

5. IN TURN, ISRAELI LEADERS TOLD CONGRESSIONAL VISITORS THAT IT REMAINED IN US NATIONAL INTEREST TO MAINTAIN CONTINUITY OF US/ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP AND PRESENCE OF STRONG ISRAEL IN MIDDLE EAST. THEY EMPHASIZED THAT DIMINUTION OF US SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL WOULD ALSO REDUCE US INFLUENCE IN ARAB WORLD, CREATING OPENING FOR INCREASED SOVIET INFLUENCE IN AREA. CONTRASTING ISRAELI AND VIETNAMESE SITUATIONS, GOI LEADERS ARGUED THAT FIRM ECONOMIC/MILITARY SUPPORT WOULD OBTAIN NEED FOR US SOLDIERS EVER TO FIGHT ISRAEL'S BATTLES. LEADERSHIP HAS STRESSED ISRAEL'S NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE WITH GUARANTEES, MULTILATERAL OR OTHERWISE, AND HAS EVINced VIRTUALLY NO INTEREST IN US ASSURANCES AT THIS POINT. AS REGARDS ANALYSIS OF RELATIVE FLEXIBILITY OF EGYPT AND ISRAEL IN LATEST NEGOTIATIONS, ISRAELIS HAVE DEFENSIVELY INSISTED THAT EGYPT WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR FAILURE OF TALKS. SENIOR ISRAELIS HAVE STRONGLY IMPLIED THAT SADAT HAD DECEIVED CONGRESSIONAL VISITORS, AND SAID BLUNTLY THAT ISRAEL

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HAD MADE THE GREATEST CONCESSIONS FOR A SETTLEMENT, WHILE EGYPT FAILED TO ACKNOWLEDGE EVEN GOAL OF "PEACE".

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AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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6. U.S. AID FOR ISRAEL. ON ISSUE OF ISRAELI AID, GOI LEADERS MADE STRONG PITCH TO CODELS THAT FULFILLMENT OF ITS REQUEST IS ESSENTIAL TO MAINTAIN BALANCE OF STRENGTH IN AREA. DEFENSE MINISTER PERES TOLD ONE GROUP PROBABLY FACETIOUSLY THAT IF CONGRESS WANTED TO BE TOUGH WITH ISRAEL IS SHOULD GIVE ENTIRE AID IN FORM OF LOANS, EMBPHASIZING ISRAEL'S EXCELLENT RECORD OF ALWAYS REPAYING LOANS IN FULL AND ON TIME.

7. ARAB-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS. GOI IS HOLD FIRM TOO ITS POSITION AS OF MARCH 22. THERE HAVE BEEN SOME TENTATIVE SIGNS HOWEVER THAT GOI MAY BE RECONSIDERING WHAT WOULD BE REQUIRED TO ATTAIN ANOTHER INTERIM AGREEMENT (SEE PARA 8). PICTURE IS SOMEWHAT CONFUSED, HOWEVER, BY EVOLUTION OF BODY OF OPINION WHICH ARGUES THAT ISRAEL SHOULD NOW GO THE FULL DISTANCE--I.E., IT SHOULD SHOW ALL ITS CARDS AND SAY WHAT IT IS PREPARED TO OFFER FOR REAL PEACE. THIS VIEWPOINT IS CONTINUATION OF DISCUSSIONS WHICH BEGAN EVEN BEFORE SECRE-
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TARY'S LAST TWO TRIPS TO AREA, URGING GOI TO GO TO GENEVA WITH FULL FLEDGED PEACE INITIATIVE. THIS REMAINS, HOWEVER, FAR FROM PREDOMINANT SENTIMENT AS TO HOW TO PROCEED.

8. ACCORDING TO PUBLIC SOURCES, GOI IS NOW CONSIDERING FOUR OPTIONS FOR RENEWING NEGOTIATIONS: A) LIMITED

AGREEMENT INVOLVING GOE NON-USE OF FORCE DECLARATION IN EXCHANGE FOR EASTERN PART OF PASSES AND OILFIELDS; B) A BROADER AGREEMENT INVOLVING GOE NON-BELLIGERENCY DECLARATION IN EXCHANGE FOR FULL PASSES AND OILFIELDS, WITH POSSIBILITY THAT NEW DEFENSE LINE COULD BE FURTHER EAST THAN IN EARLIER PROPOSALS; C) OVERALL BILATERAL AGREEMENTS UNDER US MEDIATION; D) NEGOTIATIONS AT GENEVA FOR EITHER OVERALL SETTLEMENT OR SERIES OF INTERIM BILATERAL AGREEMENTS. ISRAELIS BELIEVE THAT THESE OFFERS, IN ADDITION TO REPRESENTING CONSIDERABLE FLEXIBILITY, CONSTITUTE BASIS FOR RENEWING SECRETARY'S MEDIATION EFFORT IF EGYPTIAN ARE SERIOUSLY INTERESTED.

9. FROM ISRAELI VIEWPOINT, EARLY TURNAROUND IN GOI NEGOTIATING STAND WOULD UNDERMINE GOVERNMENT'S CREDIBILITY AT HOME AND ABROAD. MOREOVER, AS ISRAELI LEADERS AND ADMINISTRATION SEE IT, SADAT REMAINS INTERESTED IN BILATERAL AGREEMENT, SEEING GENEVA PITFALLS IN MUCH SAME WAY AS GOI DOES. ISRAELIS THINK SADAAT WILL MODIFY HIS NEGOTIATING POLICY PROVIDED US DOES NOT PRESSURE ISRAEL ON HIS BEHALF AND THAT ISRAELI HOLDS FIRMLY TO ITS DEMAND FOR APPROPRIATE POLITICAL CONCESSIONS FOR WITHDRAWALS. GOI LEADERS HAVE ALSO STATED REPEATEDLY IN RECENT WEEKS THAT US PRESSURE ON ISRAEL FOR UNILATERAL CONCESSIONS WILL BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE, LEADING TO STIFFENING OF GOI POSITION EVEN AT EXPENSE OF DEEPENING RIFT WITH USG. IN SUPPORT OF THEIR ARGUMENT, ISRAELIS NOTE THAT NEITHER 1957 SINAI WITHDRAWAL OR REPRIEVE OF EGYPTIAN THIRD ARMY AFTER OCTOBER 1973 WAR, BOTH AT US INSISTENCE, HAD FURTHERED CAUSE OF PEACE.
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